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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 52/211 A of 19 December 1997, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-third session a report on actions taken pursuant to the resolution. The present report is a review of the current humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, detailing humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations and its partners over the past year and drawing attention to future prospects.

II. Review of the current humanitarian situation in Afghanistan

2. The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, particularly in those pockets of the country subjected to recurrent military activities, taxing the coping mechanisms and energies of even the most resilient strata of Afghan society. This downward trend is graphically illustrated by the widespread loss of human life; violations of human rights; destruction of social and economic infrastructures; environmental degradation; food insecurity and malnutrition; high levels of unemployment and poverty, a total absence of social services, and an increase in illicit drug production. In addition, the floods and earthquakes that have struck south-western and north-eastern Afghanistan respectively in the first half of 1998 have seriously disrupted the already precarious situation of people living in more than 420 remote villages.

3. The floods of January and early February 1998 in southern Afghanistan killed 50 people and thousands of animals, destroying a substantial number of homes, food and feed stocks, water supply systems, crops and orchards in more than 300 villages. The damage inflicted on drainage and irrigation systems by the floods will continue to affect thousands of livelihoods for some time to come.

4. On 4 February 1998, an earthquake struck Takhar province, a remote mountainous area in northern Afghanistan. The earthquake destroyed 28 villages and resulted in the death of over 2,000 people, rendering a further 20,000 homeless. Despite heavy snowfalls and rugged terrain, which hampered the delivery of relief supplies, these eventually reached the affected area. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) supported an airdrop operation, which the United Nations subsequently complemented with an airlift. Coordination between agencies, both at Islamabad and in the field, was conducted efficiently, with ICRC coordinating non-food relief, the United Nations coordinating food supplies and *Medecins sans frontières* (MSF) taking responsibility for medical supplies and coordination. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA), backed up by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office and a United Nations disaster assessment and coordination (UNDAC) team dispatched from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) at Geneva, served as the focal point for information collation, consolidation and dissemination.

5. On 30 May 1998, another earthquake, registering 6.9 on the Richter scale, struck the same region, affecting three districts. Some 4,000 people are believed to have died and over 1,300 injured. Seventy villages suffered 50 per cent destruction, while others were severely damaged, including some of the villages affected by the February earthquake. More than 100 isolated and impoverished mountain villages were affected. Working closely with ICRC, Norwegian Afghan Committee, Afghan Aid and other non-governmental organizations, the United Nations relief operation quickly established field centres at Faizabad. Another centre at Rustaq was immediately operational through the presence of MSF, the International Federation of the Red Cross, OXFAM, ACTED, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, CONCERN and other national non-governmental organizations. In addition, logistics bases were established in Tajikistan and Pakistan. The remoteness of affected villages rendered the operation almost totally dependent on helicopters based in Tajikistan. The World Food Programme (WFP) was in the forefront of mobilizing and distributing food to some 50,000 earthquake victims. Two UNDAC teams were deployed to strengthen the field coordination capacity. The relief operation addressed immediate needs, but the aid community must urgently plan to meet the medium-term emergency rehabilitation needs of affected villages.

6. The enforcement of Taliban edicts restricting women's employment and girls' education, along with other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Afghanistan, continue to affect the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. The ban on women's employment severely limits access to women, prevents full deployment of national female United Nations and non-governmental organizations staff, and is resulting in loss of livelihoods, especially among women and female-headed households.

7. There are few medical professionals in Afghanistan and a very small number of female professionals. The dearth

of female health workers presents an enormous problem in areas where women are not permitted to be treated by male staff. The overall health-care situation in Afghanistan remains poorly managed and monitored. Acute respiratory infections (ARI) continue to constitute a major cause of morbidity and mortality among children under five. Malaria contributes to a significant proportion of deaths, miscarriages and incidences of anaemia, low birth weight and still birth.

8. The contamination of large areas with landmines and unexploded ordnance remains a major hindrance to rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan, as well as a deterrent to the return of refugees. More than 725 square kilometres of land remain contaminated, of which 324 square kilometres are considered high priority for clearance.

9. The Taliban-imposed blockade of the Ghazni-Kabul route south of the Central Highland region of Hazarajat remains. The Taliban did open a limited humanitarian corridor in May 1998 to allow WFP to transport 800 tons of food into the region on condition that 200 tons were also provided to Ghorband, a Taliban enclave in the conflict zone north of Parwan province. Failure by the northern alliance to provide security and ensure safety of food convoys from Mazar-I-Sharif and Pulikhumri remained a major logistics bottleneck on the northern route. Shortages created by a poor harvest in 1997 were exacerbated by the effective blockade of the trade route upon which the rural communities in the Hazarajat region depend, and by the difficulty in transporting supplies via routes from the north owing to insecurity and looting. An estimated 167,000 people in the region are reported to be running out of food, and require at least 7,500 tons of food to sustain them for three months. The 800 tons of food allowed by the Taliban administration to be transported to the Hazarajat region, in addition to 1,700 tons of food purchased by WFP in the region, is not enough.

10. The operational environment in the country has fluctuated unpredictably. The United Nations agencies and their partners have continued to provide, where conditions permit, humanitarian assistance and support for the restoration of basic services in most parts of Afghanistan. Insecurity in northern Afghanistan, especially Mazar-I-Sharif and parts of Kunduz province, has not allowed the United Nations to resume activities there.

11. Daily interference with United Nations programme design and implementation, culminating in an upsurge of systematic harassment, compelled United Nations agencies to suspend assistance activities in southern Afghanistan on 24 March 1998.

12. In view of the operational difficulties faced by the United Nations and its partners in the Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan, a high-level United Nations inter-agency mission went to Afghanistan on 4 May 1998. The mission was led by Mr. Martin Griffiths, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA, and was mandated to discuss with the Taliban administration a number of issues, including privileges and immunities of the United Nations staff; participation of international and national female staff in United Nations assistance programmes; and access to health care and education. The mission spent 10 days at Kabul, and reached an agreement with the Taliban administration on a number of issues. The agreement was concluded in a 23-point memorandum of understanding signed by the Taliban administration on 13 May 1998. The document lays out the code of conduct for both the United Nations and the local authorities, sets up a mechanism to enhance cooperation and resolution of problems, and deals in a preliminary way with the gender issues that have plagued relations between the Taliban and the United Nations.

13. In this agreement, the Taliban for the first time have put on record the basic right of women and girls to have access to education and health care. However, agreement was not reached on the "Mahram edict", which restricts the movement of Muslim female international and national staff members unless they are accompanied by a close male blood relative. This has been one of the major sources of difficulties in Taliban-controlled parts of Afghanistan. A follow-up discussion on this issue involving Islamic scholars is planned, in consultation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In general, the memorandum of understanding signed by the Taliban administration is considered to indicate their willingness to work with the United Nations, although it should be seen as the start of a process that will require continued vigilance and resolve by the United Nations to see it through. Following the signing of the memorandum, the United Nations resumed operations in southern Afghanistan on 28 May 1998.

14. On 13 July 1998, Taliban authorities issued an ultimatum to international non-governmental organizations to move into the dilapidated premises of the Kabul Polytechnic or leave Kabul. In response to this ultimatum, almost all of the 38 international non-governmental organizations active at Kabul left the city. After the expulsion, a letter was sent on 23 July 1998 from the United Nations to the Taliban representative at Islamabad, expressing grave concern about the decision taken by the Taliban and its repercussions on the general welfare and the health and nutritional status of the vulnerable population of

Kabul. The United Nations, in solidarity with international non-governmental organizations and at their request, intervened with the Taliban in an effort to achieve a satisfactory resolution of the relocation issue. These discussions resulted in the establishment of a non-governmental organizations-Taliban commission, with United Nations facilitation, which aims to review this and other issues.

III. Assistance strategy for Afghanistan

15. The second meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG), chaired by Norway, was held in New York on 3 December 1997. The group discussed, *inter alia*, the political and security situation in Afghanistan; the strategic framework and assistance strategy for Afghanistan; human rights; health situation; gender and related issues; and drug control. During the meeting, ASG endorsed the evolving strategy for Afghanistan, which included some of the main themes of the strategic framework process – a move towards common programming, needs-based and principle-centred approaches, and independent monitoring. The proposal to establish a common funding mechanism for all assistance activities was deemed premature.

16. On 4 February 1998, the United Nations launched the Consolidated Appeal for Assistance to Afghanistan for the period January to December 1998. It requested US$ 157 million to support voluntary repatriation, mine clearance, relief and food aid, health care, agriculture, water and sanitation, income generation and training, coordination and management support, and longer-term projects, such as those in the fields of education and rural and urban rehabilitation. This appeal is a transitional one, and constitutes one of the first steps in implementing the assistance strategy for Afghanistan. As of August 1998, a total of US$ 30 million had been pledged or contributed to the United Nations and non-governmental organizations for the programme outlined in the appeal. This represents only 20 per cent of the amount required for the whole year.

17. During March and April 1998, a small team, which included United Nations political, humanitarian and development representatives, the World Bank and the non-governmental organizations community, prepared a document entitled "Making a reality of principled common programming". The document was drafted on the basis of the conclusions of the second ASG meeting after a series of consultations with assistance stakeholders. It proposed a mechanism whereby assistance actors might link together more effectively in order to agree on overall priorities, programmes and policies with a view to improving the collective impact of assistance on beneficiaries, and where possible to contribute to broader efforts to achieve sustainable peace. Accompanying documents entitled "Monitoring and evaluation for a common programme" and "Principles, capacity-building and gender in Afghanistan" were also prepared.

18. The third meeting of ASG took place in London on 5 May 1998, under the joint chairmanship of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. It was preceded by a series of donor missions to Afghanistan in April 1998, including a joint European Union mission and missions from the United States and Canada. The meeting agreed that an Afghanistan programming board be established, and that the aid community must send unified messages on issues of principle to the presumptive authorities. It was agreed that the programme should be human rights-centred, with gender as a human rights issue. A key yardstick of the 1999 appeal will be common programming.

19. The United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan launched an emergency appeal for US$ 9.5 million on 12 June 1998 for relief and emergency rehabilitation support for victims of the 30 May earthquake in northern Afghanistan. As of 12 June 1998, a total of US$ 2.63 million was available from the unspent balance of funds requested for the February 1998 earthquake operation and new pledges from donors. This represents 27.7 per cent of the total amount required. It is essential that donors provide funding to ensure that the affected population is adequately sheltered before winter sets in.

IV. Implementation of humanitarian programmes and prospects for the future

A. Voluntary repatriation

20. As of 15 June 1998, some 49,000 Afghan refugees have returned to their homes this year, mostly from refugee camps in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. This brings the total number of Afghan refugees who have returned since the inception of the voluntary repatriation programme in 1992 to just over four million. Repatriation from the Islamic Republic of Iran under the UNHCR programme is negligible, with only 389 persons returning in the first half of 1998. There have been instances at Herat of arbitrary arrest, long-term detention and forced labour of

Afghan refugees from the Hazara tribe returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran to central and northern Afghanistan.

21. An estimated 1.4 million Afghan refugees remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran and 1.2 million in Pakistan. This gives Afghanistan the unfortunate distinction of remaining UNHCR's largest single refugee caseload for 18 consecutive years. The current political and military developments, combined with Taliban edicts on women's employment and girls' education, are tending to discourage repatriation. Other factors, such as economic issues and the absence of income-earning opportunities, changing refugee profile (landless tenant farmers who have nothing to return to) also have a bearing on the current low rate of return. WFP continues to be an active partner in providing repatriation and reintegration assistance under the voluntary group repatriation programme.

B. Mine clearance

22. Mines remain a major deterrent to the repatriation of refugees, the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the rebuilding of livelihoods and the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance in Afghanistan. An estimated 10 persons continue to be injured or killed by landmines each day.

23. The UNOCHA Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) is part of a more comprehensive system response to facilitate other endeavours in relief, rehabilitation, and development work in Afghanistan. In cooperation with the World Bank, the programme is currently in the process of analysing the social and economic benefits of minefield clearance. This information will be used to support efforts in developing a multisectoral common programming mechanism for all stakeholders engaged in providing relief, rehabilitation and development assistance in Afghanistan.

24. Mine action is a process with four field components: mine awareness, minefield survey and marking, mine clearance training and mine clearance. The Programme is managed from the UNOCHA Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan located at Islamabad, and a network of four regional offices at Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Herat.

25. A number of non-governmental organizations work under MAPA: three international non-governmental organizations (HALO Trust, Save The Children Fund USA, and Handicap International), and eight local Afghan non-governmental organizations (Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation; Mine Detection Dog Centre; Monitoring, Evaluation and Training Agency; Mine Clearance Planning Agency; Afghan Red Crescent Society; and Afghan Technical Consultants. In addition, an Iranian non-governmental organization, the Ansari Relief Institute, is conducting mine awareness training for refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran who are returning home. The BBC-Afghan Education Drama continues to broadcast mine-related messages through its very popular radio drama series "New home, new life".

26. The target for the end of 1998 is to clear 38 square kilometres of high priority mined areas and 31.5 square kilometres of former battlefield. In the first half of 1998, 12 square kilometres of priority mined areas and 8 square kilometres of former battlefield have been cleared. The lower than expected output was due to the suspension of all United Nations activities in southern Afghanistan. Some 280,000 people received mine awareness training during the first half of 1998.

V. Relief and food aid

A. Internally displaced persons

27. There are more than 1.5 million IDPs in the country at large, most of whom reside with relatives and friends in provincial capitals and camps at Herat. The task of reintegrating them remains a priority for the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. An estimated 28,000 IDPs are currently provided assistance in five camps in Herat province by WFP and other United Nations agencies, ICRC and non-governmental organizations. The ongoing fighting in parts of Badghis and Ghormach provinces in western Afghanistan continues to discourage IDPs from returning to their homes from these camps at Herat.

28. In addition to the ongoing conflict, enforcement of the Taliban edicts on women, men and girls remains a major factor in increasing the rate of displacement and exile, especially from Kabul. Many Afghans, especially educated ones, are unwilling or unable to submit to the harsh lifestyle imposed on them by the Taliban administration.

B. Vulnerable groups

29. Vulnerable groups, including women, female-headed households, the disabled and elderly, children (especially orphans and street children), victims of natural disasters and the poor, continued to receive relief and rehabilitation

assistance from the United Nations and non-governmental organizations in the first half of 1998. One of the most significant relief assistance programmes for vulnerable groups in Afghanistan is WFP's subsidized bread sales project. In addition, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and ICRC are providing winter relief assistance to vulnerable groups and supporting income generation projects in different parts of the country.

30. The Comprehensive Disabled Afghans Programme, a component of the UNDP Poverty Eradication and Community Empowerment (PEACE) Initiative, plays an important role in leading and coordinating actions and policies on disability in Afghanistan. The Programme is executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and implemented in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Radda Barnen, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and Guardian.

31. Almost half of Afghanistan's disabled population received their injuries from the war and landmines. CDAP and its partners provide artificial limbs and other appliances, physiotherapy and employment support through job retaining programmes and micro-credit schemes. In addition, the programme provides support to the families of war victims through home-based training in daily living skills, self-care, and counselling. In 1997 alone, CDAP activities benefited some 26,400 disabled Afghans, and this will continue through community-based programmes.

C. Food aid

32. Afghanistan remains a food deficit country, and nutritional security among vulnerable groups, in congested cities with limited employment opportunities, as well as in traditional food deficit areas, (notably the Central Highlands and the provinces of Badakhshan and Ghor) is low. Preliminary findings from the WFP/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) crop and food supply assessment mission in May 1998 estimate a cereal deficit of 680,000 tons, of which 560,000 tons will be met through commercial imports and 120,000 through food aid.

33. The overall objective of WFP in Afghanistan is to provide humanitarian relief through institutional feeding, repatriation assistance to returning refugees, emergency assistance to victims of natural disasters and IDPs, and subsidized bread sales through urban bakeries. Life-sustaining rehabilitation assistance is provided through food-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-seeds, in partnership with FAO.

34. In 1998, some 1.2 million Afghans will benefit from WFP's total allocation of 106,590 tons of food commodities. As of June 1998, some 675,000 Afghans have benefited, of whom 600,000 are vulnerable people reached through the subsidized bread sales projects at Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. In this project, WFP wheat is provided to selected urban bakeries through an implementing partner to bake bread and sell it to targeted beneficiaries at a subsidized price. Proceeds generated from this project are reinvested in viable income generation projects, including projects identified by women and widows. In addition, relief assistance is being provided to over 50,000 earthquake victims, 88,000 inhabitants in the blockaded Central Highlands region, and 28,000 internally displaced persons in camps at Herat. In collaboration with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, WFP assists over 65,000 hospital inpatients, orphans in orphanages and malnourished children through maternity and child health-care clinics.

35. Despite the restrictions on women's movement and employment, WFP continued to reach women with food assistance through the subsidized bakeries project, institutional feeding projects and food-for-training projects. At Kabul, women-run bakeries are operating and benefiting over 36,000 widows and their dependants, and providing employment opportunities for 238 women.

D. Health

36. The health sector is still one of the worst affected social sectors in Afghanistan, with over 60 per cent of its operation depending on external aid. Working in close collaboration, the Ministry of Public Health, WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNDP and other United Nations agencies, as well as ICRC and non-governmental organizations, provided support to the health sector in the first half of the year.

37. WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA are currently supporting the following programmes in the health sector: reproductive health and safe motherhood initiatives; control of communicable diseases; an expanded immunization programme; and primary health care and training. In addition, WHO is supporting a basic development needs programme and a malaria and leishmaniasis control programme. During the first half of 1998, WHO's Basic Development Needs Programme was implemented in seven

districts in three provinces, benefiting some 31,545 people. Services under the programme included health education and credit facilities for income generation projects. One hundred male and 50 female doctors were trained in the prevention and control of malaria at Jalalabad in March 1998.

38. Through national immunization day campaigns, an estimated two million children under five years were reached with two doses of oral polio vaccine and one dose of Vitamin A, and over 250,000 women received two doses of tetanus vaccines. Due to insecurity in northern Afghanistan, the polio campaign was not carried out in eight provinces.

39. WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, along with ICRC, will continue to support activities, mainly training, in the health sector. Priority activities will continue to include control of communicable disease, promotion of safe motherhood, eradication of polio, primary health care and promotion of environmental health.

E. Water supply and sanitation

40. Lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate excreta disposal facilities are responsible for 42 per cent of all deaths in Afghanistan from diarrhoeal disease. Working in close collaboration, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations continue to support the provision of safe drinking water and improvements to sanitary conditions in rural and urban areas with the objective of reducing morbidity and mortality due to diarrhoeal disease.

41. In collaboration with the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development, UNICEF is providing support to communities so that they can construct safe water sources and household sanitary latrines. The UNICEF water supply programme has a target of providing safe drinking water for 200,000 people in 1998. In the first half of 1998, 180 hand pump wells were constructed. Work is ongoing on four piped water schemes, with five production wells, 14 kilometres of pipeline and 110 standpoints. In addition, 550 household sanitary latrines were constructed in different communities. The impact of these activities is enhanced through the dissemination of hygiene messages on safe drinking water and household sanitation.

42. Since 1996, WHO, in cooperation with WFP and UNOCHA, has been engaged in the rehabilitation of water supply systems at Kandahar, Jalalabad, Nimoz, Ghazni and Faizabad. Under the UNDP PEACE Initiative, UNOPS and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) are supporting the provision of safe drinking water and improvements to sanitary conditions in rural and urban areas. In the first half of 1998, UNOPS provided safe drinking water through the construction of 30 tube wells, 10 shallow wells, and two spring protection structures. In addition, Habitat is repairing the Herat city drainage system, and is working with communities to build latrines and solid waste bins and organizing the collection and disposal of solid waste, as well as improving access and modifying water supply systems.

F. Food and agriculture

43. The overall objective of the PEACE Initiative crop and livestock projects implemented by FAO in partnership with WFP, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, is to promote food security, poverty alleviation, good governance and enhanced self-reliance through an integrated and decentralized agricultural development approach. It involves a move from rehabilitation intervention to sustainable agricultural development. Activities supported under the food and agriculture programme include seed production, horticulture, plant protection, crop improvement, extension and training, sericulture and apiculture, and livestock development.

44. A total of 169 farmer field demonstrations of major cereals and pulses were conducted in different regions, benefiting over 2,000 farmers in the first half of 1998. Eleven horticultural training courses were conducted, and farmers were trained in lime sulfur application and seed production. Community members were trained in the mechanical control of sunn pest and locusts. Some 7,500 hectares of agricultural land were cleared of locusts. In addition, 328 district trainers and provincial supervisors were provided with all essential inputs for plant protection services in their locations or regions.

45. In the livestock sector, FAO continued to provide animal health care services through 255 district based veterinary field units (VFUs) established across the country. These VFUs carry out vaccinations against various livestock diseases, deworming and treatment of specific diseases under a cost recovery programme. The VFUs are being developed to self-sufficiency, and so far three have been privatized in Nangarhar province. Diagnostic facilities are currently supported and in use at Kandahar, Jalalabad, Khost, Mazar-I-Sharif and Kabul. A rinderpest surveillance is ongoing in Khost province after an outbreak in 1995. So far, 228 veterinarians and paravets have undergone training in 34 courses. In the women support programme, 12 women,

11 vets and one livestock production officer have been trained in animal husbandry, poultry production and livestock disease. A survey indicates that livestock numbers are back to pre-war levels and contributing to family incomes and livelihoods.

G. Rural and urban rehabilitation

46. Rebuilding communities in rural and urban areas is a major focus of UNDP's multi-year PEACE Initiative launched in May 1997. FAO, UNOPS and Habitat implement the PEACE Initiative, in partnership with beneficiary communities. Sectoral areas for assistance include food and agriculture, water supply and sanitation, vocational training and income generation, health and education. Halfway through its implementation, it is reaching 16 districts and five urban centres.

47. The urban rehabilitation component of the PEACE Initiative is implemented by Habitat, in partnership with other United Nations agencies. It aims to establish local systems of funding, managing, and maintaining community services, and supports the repair of citywide infrastructures without which rehabilitation initiatives led by communities would not be worthwhile. Over 2,000 homeowners at Kabul have so far participated in the home-rebuilding scheme.

48. Under the PEACE Initiative, UNOPS is supporting activities in agriculture, income generation, health and education in rural areas. In the first half of 1998, rehabilitation was carried out on small-scale traditional irrigation, bringing 6,600 hectares of land under cultivation. Repairs and reconstruction were also carried out to essential secondary and tertiary roads, providing more than 47,000 people with improved access to new markets for agricultural products. UNOPS is also training male and female health workers so that they can advise on basic health, family planning and nutrition in rural areas. In Bamyan province, the UNOPS programme recently conducted a participatory rural appraisal on women's health, with a focus on reproductive health.

H. Income generation and training

49. Vocational training and income generation remains a priority activity among United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to facilitate the creation of sustainable livelihoods among vulnerable groups and the poor. WFP organized and supported projects supporting training and income generation activities through female-headed non-governmental organizations. In the first half of 1998, 5,800 women were trained in various skills through the food-for-training project. Efforts are ongoing to transform the training activities into sustainable income-generating projects, with women controlling management through a home-based approach in Taliban-controlled areas.

50. Under the PEACE Initiative, UNOPS is supporting development of a silk production project benefiting women in six districts of Herat province. In addition, the programme is developing a micro-credit programme, including research and training for community organizations and non-governmental organizations, which is expected to provide credit to over 2,000 small entrepreneurs in Bamyan province. Habitat is also supporting income generation and training through the community forums established at Mazar-I-Sharif, Kabul and Bamyan. In each forum, such projects as carpet weaving, soap making, kitchen gardening, and embroidery and tailoring are undertaken. In the Mazar-I-Sharif forums alone, 500 women are involved in tailoring, 1,000 in embroidery, 900 in kitchen gardening and 25 in soap making.

51. UNICEF continued support to a group guaranteed lending and savings programme implemented by Save the Children USA in northern Afghanistan. The project is community-based, and benefits groups of women already involved in income-generating activities by guaranteeing a loan to improve the profitability of their activity. Over 2,600 women have received loans from the project for such activities as livestock production, spinning, embroidery, tailoring, carpet weaving and bakeries. Over 5,500 women are involved in the loan-funded activities. Repayment rate under this programme is 100 per cent.

I. Education

52. The enforcement of the Taliban edicts on girls' education and women's employment continued to be a major problem in the education sector in Afghanistan. This trend will inevitably have a longer-term impact on human resource development in Afghanistan. Most of Afghanistan's teachers, especially at the primary level, are women who are still banned from working in Taliban-controlled areas.

53. In the first half of 1998, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations continued to support home-based schools for girls in the Taliban-controlled areas, and provided support to the education sector at Badakhshan and the central Highlands where boys and girls have access to education. The home-based schools for girls at Kabul were banned by the Taliban administration on 16 June 1998, along

with vocational training programmes for women. This effectively shut down dozens of vocational training programmes that had been quietly running to give girls skills and opportunities to earn money. More than 100 home-based schools were operating at Kabul, providing education to more than 6,500 children, half of whom were girls.

J. Drug control

54. Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of illicit opiates. Over 96 per cent of the opium poppies produced in Afghanistan are cultivated on land under the control of the Taliban. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) launched a drug control strategy and an integrated four-year programme in March 1997 comprising the following modules: capacity-building for drug control; a drug control monitoring system; poppy crop reduction; and demand reduction support.

55. In October and November 1997, the Taliban authorities declared opium and heroin cultivation, production and trade illegal. At the same time, they indicated that they would only enforce the law against opium poppy cultivation when adequate development assistance was provided. In discussions with UNDCP in October 1997, they allowed free access for UNDCP survey teams in all poppy-growing areas. They also agreed to destroy opium poppy grown in areas outside those recorded in the 1997 poppy survey so as to stop the "balloon effect" from occurring, and to seize and destroy drugs, processing chemicals and heroin laboratories.

56. In accordance with UNDCP's positive conditionality policy, drug control action plans for Kandahar and Nangarhar province (the pilot areas for drug control) were prepared and endorsed by the Taliban authorities in those areas. In 1997, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) implemented a UNDCP-financed project on industrial development opportunities in the two provinces. This led to a large-scale project to reactivate a wool-textile factory at Kandahar.

57. In the first half of 1998, UNDCP completed rehabilitation work on the Nangarhar canal, repaired 11 karezes, a bridge and a district health centre, and provided improved wheat seeds for farmers to substitute for opium poppy. At Kandahar, UNDCP provided electrical equipment for the restoration of the electricity substation, and distributed improved seeds to farmers in targeted districts. As a result of the agreement reached, the authorities actively enforced the ban on opium cultivation in new areas.

K. Coordination of humanitarian programmes

58. The challenges facing the international aid community in Afghanistan have resulted in an ever-increasing need for a common vision, and a common programme to address broader cross-cutting issues, such as gender discrimination, violation of human rights and humanitarian law. This development has led to an increase in collaboration and coordination of humanitarian assistance among United Nations agencies, between United Nations humanitarian programmes and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) and between United Nations agencies, ICRC, donors and the non-governmental organization community.

59. The setting up of the first field components of a common programming mechanism in early August 1998 will provide an opportunity for the international aid community to have a common vision of its priorities in Afghanistan and send a unified message to presumptive authorities. However, implementation of the common programme will require better coordination among the United Nations family and the further strengthening and consolidation of the link between UNSMA and the office of the United Nations resident/humanitarian coordinator.

60. Under the leadership of the United Nations coordinator, UNOCHA, together with UNDP, continues to coordinate and provide logistic support for the humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan. In addition, it manages the mine action programme and the aircraft operation, and provides a 24-hour radio link among major United Nations duty stations in Afghanistan.

61. Regional coordinators are now operational at Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-I-Sharif (currently at Faizabad). The regional coordinators are enhancing coordination among United Nations agencies and between United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the field. In addition, they are also assisting the regional teams in situation assessments, strategic planning, and advocacy and dialogue with the local authorities.

62. Non-governmental organizations coordinating bodies continue to play an important role in ensuring the provision of humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance to Afghanistan. The Agency Coordination Body for Afghanistan, the Afghan NGO Coordinating Bureau, the Southern-Western and Balochistan Association for Coordination and the Islamic Coordination Council are four such bodies that are working in Afghanistan to ensure a coherent coordination of activities

undertaken by hundreds of local and international non-governmental organizations.

VI. Assistance provided by Member States

63. In addition to the activities listed above, several Member States have provided the following information on assistance to Afghanistan pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/211 A.

64. The Government of Australia contributed 5.3 million Australian dollars, of which 4.3 million was donated to United Nations agencies, and 1 million was provided to non-governmental organizations.

65. From 1996 to 1998, the Government of Belgium donated 10.2 million Belgian francs to UNHCR, 10 million to UNOCHA, and 19.4 million to non-governmental organizations for humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.

66. The emergency assistance provided by the Government of China through UNHCR for Afghan refugees included clothing items, blankets and medical supplies, 500 tons of wheat and 17,000 kilograms of tea.

67. The Government of Denmark contributed 4,865,000 United States dollars (US$) in 1998, of which 1,471,000 was donated to ICRC and 3,394,000 to non-governmental organizations.

68. In 1997, the Government of Finland contributed 12,500,000 markkaa (Fmk). Finland also contributed Fmk 43,000,000 as core resources to the globally operating international humanitarian and relief agencies, part of which contribution may also have been channelled to Afghanistan.

69. In 1997 and 1998, humanitarian assistance from the German Government totalled 14,775,026 deutsche mark (DM), of which 8,945,375 was provided for food, 170,314 for medical supplies and 83,391 for blankets. The sum of DM 3,583,033 was donated to ICRC, and DM 1,992,913 was contributed towards the relief of earthquake and flood victims.

70. In 1997 and 1998, the Government of Ireland donated 499,541 Irish pounds, of which 150,000 was donated to WFP, 50,000 to ICRC, and 299,541 to non-governmental organizations.

71. The Government of Italy donated US$ 100,000 to UNOCHA for its emergency operation for Afghan earthquake victims.

72. In 1998, the financial emergency assistance of the Government of Korea for Afghanistan totalled US $ 50,000.

73. In 1997, the Government of Luxembourg donated 10 million Luxembourg francs (Lux F) to ICRC for humanitarian relief and Lux F 6 million to WHO for medical assistance. In 1998, the amount was Lux F 15 million to ICRC, Lux F 5 million to UNICEF, and Lux F 5 million to UNOCHA.

74. In 1998, the Government of Norway contributed 59,761,000 Norwegian kroner (Nkr), of which 26,000,000 was provided to UNOCHA, 25,650,000 was donated to non-governmental organizations and the Norwegian Red Cross, and 8,111,000 was provided for the relief of earthquake victims. Further contributions will be made later in 1998, bringing Norway's humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in 1998 to approximately Nkr 85 million.

75. During the period 1996 to June 1998, the Government of Sweden has provided emergency assistance to Afghanistan that amounted to 279 million Swedish kronor (SKr). The annual assistance for 1998 amounts to date SKr 97 million. The main implementing partners have been the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, UNOCHA, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and UNDP.

76. In 1997, the Government of Switzerland contributed 2,700,000 Swiss francs (Sw F). In 1998 (as of 24 June), this amount was Sw F 895,000.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

77. Afghanistan has all the ingredients for the worst case scenario of a complex emergency: intervening neighbours with vested interests and engagement by external powers with vested interests. Within the country, there are concerns about escalating ethnic and religious differences. The mountainous terrain makes total military control in the country impossible. There is an extensive presence of arms in a country where governance capacity is reduced to nothing, and virtually all members of the educated classes have left in a massive brain drain. The illegal economy – drugs, timber trading, and smuggling – is establishing itself as the main source of income. Environmental degradation proceeds unchecked, and human rights are constantly violated.

78. The murder in July 1998 of United Nations national staff at Jalalabad, and the shooting in August 1998 of two international staff of the United Nations at Kabul, resulting in the death of one of them, are cowardly and deplorable

acts. These despicable incidents must be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Furthermore, the Secretary-General calls upon the authorities to ensure the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel, men and women, who undertake to provide assistance to the people of Afghanistan, often in the most arduous of circumstances.

79. The Secretary-General calls on all Afghans to lift unconditionally any blockade of humanitarian relief supplies. He also calls upon the Taliban authorities to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in areas under their control. This includes lifting the ban on girl's education and women's employment. The Secretary-General urges the Taliban authorities to cooperate fully with the international community in providing support for the equal access to education and health of all Afghans, males and females, to ensure that they can make a positive contribution to the future of Afghanistan.

80. The aid community has now recognized the need for a common vision, and faced by increasing challenges of gender discrimination, violation of human rights and humanitarian law, it has accepted that it must adopt a principle-centred common programming if it is to have any success in assisting the people of Afghanistan.

81. In this context, there is no distinction between short- and longer-term interventions because they reinforce each another. Closely linked to this scenario are the interrelationship between humanitarian assistance programmes and the peace process. Common programming will allow each of these elements to reinforce the other, addressing broader issues in the search for a solution to the Afghan conflict and preparing the ground for sustainable aid activities.

82. Despite the manifold difficulties, United Nations agencies and the non-governmental organization community are currently continuing to achieve positive results. They are having an impact on food security in some parts of the country and contributing to the process of rebuilding livelihoods in rural and urban areas. Moreover, there are clear signs that the Afghan private sector is still willing to invest more in the country. However, it is substantially based on a vast illegal economy.

83. The Secretary-General wishes to thank the donor community for their generous support to humanitarian and development efforts in Afghanistan over the past year. More assistance is nevertheless needed, and he appeals to donors to increase the level of their contribution to the 1998 Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan. Given the current situation in Afghanistan, the Secretary-General calls on the international community to support and strengthen the link between the peace process and humanitarian aid efforts through common programming. This is fundamental to the achievement of a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict and the implementation of sustainable assistance activities in Afghanistan.